

Joseph Newton's Windsor chair advertisements, 1725 and 1729

I write further to William Sergeant's fascinating article 'Joseph Newton, Windsor Chair Maker of Fenton, Lincolnshire' (*Regional Furniture*, 32, (2018), pp. 93–102). Newton's advertisements in *The Lincolnshire, Rutland & Stamford Mercury* appeared on 1 July 1725 and 8 May 1729. These are the earliest references to Windsor chairs made by a named individual that are known in any publication in the United Kingdom. They are transcribed below:

1 July 1725: This is to give Notice to all Gentlemen and others that have a desire to furnish themselves with New-fashioned Windsor Chairs of the best sort, may be furnish'd by Joseph Newton, the Maker, living at Fenton in the Parish of Beckingham, Lincolnshire, four Miles from Newark upon Trent in Nottinghamshire, and there is a Chair to be seen at the White Hart in Newark for a Sample, and one at the Angel in Grantham; He proposes to deliver them at the[s]e Place[s] at 7s. 6d. per Chair, and at Lincoln at 8s. and with as much speed as possible, after Notice given.

8 May 1729: This is to give Notice, That Joseph Newton of Fenton in the County of Lincoln, 4 Miles distant from Newark upon Trent, maketh all sorts of Windsor Chairs, the Price of the single Chairs 7s. 6d. a Piece, the Seat-two's, Seat-three's and four's all at 7s. per Seat, and are to be sold at Mr. John Fox's Gunsmith in Grantham, at Mr. Taylor's at the Reign'd-Deer, and at Mr. John Farrow's both in Newark, and at Mr. John Shakelton's in Nottingham, and Gentlemen that has a Desire of any of the said Chairs, may be furnish'd at any of the above-said Places, they may go by Water from Newark to Nottingham, Gainsborough or Lincoln for Three-pence a Seat. I have furnish'd a great many Gentlemen, Gardeners with them, and they are esteem'd above those that come from London for both Ease and Fashion.

John Brown 1730: The next known advertisement referring to Windsor chairs was placed by John Brown

in *The Country Journal or The Craftsman*, Issue 197, Saturday 11 April 1730. This advertisement is often wrongly dated to 1727 because of an unfortunate layout on p. 26 of Ambrose Heal's *London Furniture Makers 1660-1840* (London: Batsford, 1953), where the 1727 date appears on the preceding line. Heal writes: 'It is noticeable that at this early date he was advertising "all sorts of Windsor Garden Chairs of all sizes painted green or in the wood."' No source or date is given for these words.

The key part of Heal's handwritten notes, from which his John Brown entry was composed, is available on the British Museum website. It only says: '1730. An advertisement in "The Craftsman" 11 April 1730 gives John Brown, blind maker, "at the THREE CHAIRS & WALNUT TREE in St Paul's Church Yard, near the School."' However, according to Moss Harris in *The English Chair* (London: M. Harris & Sons, 1937): 'An advertisement of April 1730 speaks of "all sorts of Windsor Garden Chairs, of all sizes, painted green or in the wood, at John Brown's, at the Three Chairs and Walnut Tree in St. Paul's Church Yard, near the School."' Moss Harris is right; an inspection by Dr Iain Ferris of the original journal in the British Library reveals the following full text:

At JOHN BROWN'S At the Three Chairs and Wallnut Tree in St. Paul's Church-Yard, near the School, Is Made and fold BLINDS for WINDOWS of all Sorts, painted on Wyer, Canvas or Cloth, after the best and lafting Manner ever yet done: fo that if ever to dirty, they will clean without Soap or Sand if occaſion, and be like new: where may be feen great Choice of the fame, being always about them. And for the Spring Seaſon, at the fame Place is kept, ready made, all forts of Windfor Garden Chairs of all Sizes, painted green or in the Wood; where all Perfons may be furniſhed at the cheapeſt Rates.

Heal's handwritten notes reveal another John Brown advertisement, though with no specific mention of Windsor chairs:

The Craftsman, Issue 295. February 26th 1732. JOHN BROWNE. At the Three Cover'd Chairs and Walnut-Tree, the Eaſt Side of St. Paul's Church-yard, near the School, London, Makes and Sells all Sorts of BLINDS for Windows, curiouſly painted on Canvas, Silk or Wire; where is good Choice and beſt painted of any in London, none excepted. Likewiſe all Sorrs of Chairs and Cabinet Work, with Coach and other Glaſes [or Glazes] at the cheapeſt Rates.

It is clear from the breadth of goods sold by John Brown that his business was wide-ranging and one would be surprised were he to have made the Windsor chairs himself. Thereafter, the next advertisement specifically referring to Windsor chairs appears in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, Saturday 13th July 1754:

Notice is hereby given that William Partridge hath opened a Shop near the White Lion in Banbury, with all ſorts of the moſt fashionable furniture in the cabinet way ... Likewiſe all ſorts of carpentry, joiners work, and carvings; viz. Brackets, Umbrello's, Temples, Pavilions, Palliſadoes, Fences, Garden Seats, Windsor and Forrest

Chairs and Stools in the Modern Gothic, and Chinese taste; and all other Things made in Wood that are not to be had in this Part of the Country of any Person but himself.

The individual makers of these Windsors again seem likely to remain a mystery, but with the Joseph Newton advertisements there is no doubt who made, as well as sold, the chairs. It is for that reason that his 1725 and 1729 advertisements are a truly exceptional find.

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